

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 BEIRUT 02211 191257Z  
ACTION SS-25

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O R 191210Z APR 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7675  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T BEIRUT 2211

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2  
TAGS: PINT PGOV LE  
SUBJ: INTERNAL CRISIS IN LEBANON: CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN  
BOUTROS

1. HAD LENGTHY AND DISPIRITED CONVERSATION WITH FONMIN BOUTROS ABOUT INTERNAL SITUATION AFTERNOON APRIL 18. HE WAS MUCH LESS FORTHCOMING THAN MINISTER OF INTERIOR SALMAN HAD BEEN IN MORNING (BEIRUT 2196) BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT HE TOO IS FRUSTRATED WITH LACK OF ACTION. HE DEFENDED PRESIDENT AS HONEST, RELIABLE AND INTELLIGENT MAN WHO ANALYZED PROBLEMS RATIONALLY AND MADE LOGICAL, FAR-SEEING DECISIONS. HE WAS BEING CRITICIZED BY MARONITES AS PRO-SYRIAN, BY MUSLIMS AS PRO-LEBANESE FRONT, AND BY SYRIANS AS BEING UNABLE TO TAKE DECISIONS, ALTHOUGH THEY WOULD NOT GIVE HIM WHEREWITHAL TO DO SO.

2. BOUTROS SAID SYRIANS HAD ENTERED LEBANON WITH PROMISE THEY WOULD RESTORE ORDER AND SEE TO IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORD LIMITING ARMS HELD BY THE PARTIES. THEY HAD DONE NEITHER. (THIS NOT QUITE FAIR; THEY DID A GOOD JOB OF MAINTAINING ORDER UNTIL THE FAYYADIYAH INCIDENT.) PRESIDENT HAD SENT THEM IN TO SEPARATE  
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THE CONTESTANTS AT SHIYAH-AIN AR-RUMMANEH, AND THEY HAD BEEN FIRED UPON BY THE CHRISTIANS. THEY HAD RETALIATED. SULEIMAN FRANGIEH HAD RECOGNIZED THAT, DEPLORABLE AS THEIR REACTION MIGHT HAVE BEEN, IT WAS INEVITABLE ONCE THE CHRISTIANS FIRED UPON THEM. HAD THE SYRIANS FIRED ON SHIYAH, THE MUSLIMS WOULD BE AS UP IN ARMS AGAINST SARKIS AS THE CHRISTIANS WERE.

3. I SAID PRESIDENT WAS ALREADY IN TROUBLE WITH MUSLIMS AS WELL AS CHRISTIANS. EMERGING THEME, WHICH ARAFAT HAD USED WITH WALDHEIM, WAS THAT ARMY WAS MARONITE PRESERVE AND MUSLIM OFFICERS HAD NO INFLUENCE IN IT. THERE WAS FURTHERMORE CRITICISM OF SARKIS UNWILLINGNESS TO TAKE DECISIONS. PERHAPS NOTHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT LATTER PROBLEM, BUT SOMETHING COULD BE DONE ABOUT THE FORMER. I GAVE HIM QUICK SUMMARY OF SURVEY TEAM'S FINDINGS AND SAID IT SEEMED OBVIOUS TO ME THAT KHOURY WAS DOING A BETTER JOB THAN PEOPLE GAVE HIM CREDIT FOR. HE SHOULD BE EXPLAINING HIS POLICIES TO MUSLIM LEADERS (BOUTROS SAID HE HAD ALREADY TOLD HIM TO DO SO). IT WAS ALSO APPARENT, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WERE NOT ENOUGH MUSLIMS IN RESPONSIBLE JOBS AT YARZE. HE SHOULD DO SOMETHING ABOUT THAT.

4. BOUTROS ASKED IF I HAD EVER TALKED POLITICS WITH KHOURY, AND SUGGESTING I DO SO. HE SAID KHOURY WAS UNWILLING TO TRUST MUSLIMS WITH SENIOR JOBS AT YARZE BECAUSE HE WAS NOT SURE WHAT WAS GOING TO HAPPEN TO LEBANON. HE NEEDED TO BE TOLD THAT PARTITION WAS IMPRACTICAL AND THAT HE SHOULD BRING MORE MUSLIMS INTO HIS CONFIDENCE.

5. WE THEN TALKED AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT MARONITE INTENTIONS. BOUTROS IS VERY DUBIOUS ABOUT BASHIR GEMAYEL AND IS PARTICULARLY CONCERNED BY A REPORT THAT THE LATTER INTENDS TO SOUND US OUT ON WHAT OUR VIEWS WOULD BE IF THERE WERE A LEADERSHIP VOID IN LEBANON. THIS COULD HAPPEN IN ONLY TWO WAYS--THE PRESIDENT RESIGNS, OR IS INCAPACITATED BY DEATH OR ILLNESS. THE PARLIAMENT COULD NOT  
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SACK HIM. THE IMPLICATION WAS THAT BASHIR WAS CONTEMPLATING AN ASSASSINATION. I SAID NO SUCH QUERIES HAD BEEN MADE OF US. BOUTROS SAID HE UNDERSTOOD BASHIR WAS SENDING SOMEONE TO WASHINGTON TO TALK TO DRAPER ON SUBJECT. I ASSURED HIM HE WOULD GET NO HOUSE FROM US.

6. BOUTROS SAID HE THOUGHT MY TALK WITH PIERRE GEMAYEL LAST WEEK HAD SOME EFFECT AND HOPED THAT MAYBE NEXT WEEK I COULD TALK TO HIM AGAIN, ALONE, AND WARN HIM OF THE DANGERS POSED BY BASHIR'S PLANS, WHATEVER THEY ARE. I SAID THE SUBJECT WAS DIFFICULT, BUT I WOULD SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE.

7. BOUTROS SAID HE HAD MET WITH CHAMOUN THAT MORNING AND THOUGHT HE HAD TALKED HIM OUT OF DEMANDING A PARLIAMENTARY SESSION ON THURSDAY TO EXAMINE THE PALESTINIAN DOSSIER. HE THOUGHT THE SESSION WOULD BE POSTPONED. IF NOT, THERE WOULD BE A DISASTER. (THIS MORNING'S PRESS REPORTS PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS, INCLUDING SAEB SALAAM, CAMILLE CHAMOUN AND PIERRE GEMAYEL, MET ON 18TH AND HAD PRODUCTIVE DISCUSSIONS, AGREEING TO POSTPONE FORMAL DISCUSSION OF PALESTINIAN QUESTION BUT TO CONTINUE CONSULTATIONS ON SUBJECT.)

8. COMMENT: ARMIN MEYER ALWAYS USED TO SAY THAT THINGS WERE

NEVER AS GOOD OR AS BAD AS THEY SEEMED. I THINK THIS APPLIES IN THIS CASE, BUT NEVER HAVE I ENCOUNTERED SO MUCH UNRELIEVED GLOOM AMONG THE LEBANESE AS IN RECENT DAYS. NEWS RE PARLIAMENTARY AGREEMENT MAY LIFT SPIRITS ON ONE HAND, BUT THEY ARE LIKELY TO BE DEPRESSED ON OTHER BY NEWS OF KILLING OF TWO CHRISTIAN POLICEMEN ON CONFRONTATION LINE YESTERDAY. THERE ARE TIMES WHEN IT APPEARS SOMEONE MAY INDEED BE TRYING TO DESTABILIZE LEBANON. BASHIR GEMAYEL IS THE LEADING SUSPECT AT PRESENT.  
PARKER

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## Message Attributes

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